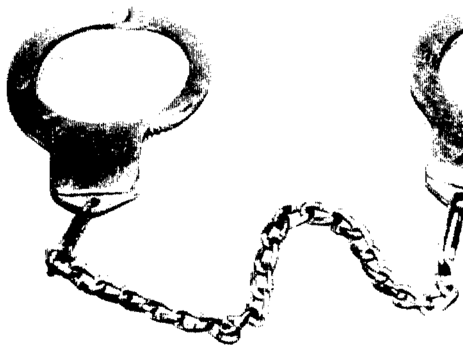
S.A.S.

How To Escape From Handcuffs

SWIFT ACTION SYSTEM



By
David De-Val

FIRST PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY

DAVID DE-VAL

DEDICATED TO ANN



DEDICATED TO MY DAUGHTER ANN WHO LOOKED ON, AND WORRIED WHEN I HUNG HIGH IN THE AIR.

David De-Val,
2 Springhead Avenue,
Springhead, Oldham, Lancashire,
OL4 5SP. England

INTRODUCTIONS

****

I have taken a keen and active interest in the fascinating study of all types of handcuffs and locking devices since I was a youth. The press now call me "The man who can walk through walls" since I hit the headlines as a professional escapologist, assisted by my charming daughter Ann, with my jail and prison escapes, including one from the highwayman Dick Turpins condemned cell in York Castle. I have escaped from 50 gallons of Tetley beer, a stunt which Houdini failed in 1905. I now claim that "NOTHING ON EARTH CAN HOLD ME A PRISONER". Twice since the press started to take an interest in my work I have been approached by world powers to reveal in a manual my secret methods of escape from cells and handcuffs, this is my first release (excuse the pun). I hope you will guard the secrets contained in this work.

DAVID DE-VAL 1987.

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David has earned himself the title, The Modern Houdini and Master of Escapes. He is a true technical expert on Houdini stunts, lock picking and jail escapes and handcuff release methods, frequently offering his advice to television and film companies who wish to get it right historically, his unique Houdini knowledge unequalled.

He has now turned his attention from entertainment to the more serious subject of escape from capture by an enemy. In this work he has explained all the known methods of escape from every type of handcuff in current use throughout the world.

ANN LITTLER.

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My S.A.S., Swift Action System will enable any one of average intelligence to release themselves from any pair of handcuffs or leg irons. Should you be in the unfortunate position of being held captive by an enemy you will be glad that you read this booklet. Don't be put off when later in this work I start to refer to picking open handcuff locks, believe me it sounds much more difficult than it really is. Handcuff locks are not complicated, luckily for us would be escapers the locks are very simple in construction, after all they were not made to hold a person prisoner for life like some ancient dungeon shackle, but merely to hold a prisoner under escort during transportation. Picking is comparitively easy with simple make-shift picks. Before we get down to the serious business in hand I would like to say a few general words about handcuff design, it's useful to know that in all cases the lock which secures each side on any pair of handcuffs opens with the same key, both have identical mechanisms. Further this key is common to all the other handcuffs made by this manufacturer.

Mistakenly people assume that handcuffs because of their use must contain strong and complicated locking systems with many thousands of different keys. So remember, one key will open the complete range, and in most cases others made by different makers, but before you rush out to buy one key, I must point out that currently on the world market are over 375 types of handcuff and leg irons each with a different key, don't worry, once you have read this booklet we will have you opening handcuffs just as easy without using the key, as with it, with just a simple bent wire pick.

Now we must start to become a little technical when I explain about the lock contained in most cuffs, unlike padlocks which will only open when all the levers are lifted to a DIFFERENT height, handcuffs are much more simple and it's only necessary to lift one or in the case of the better handcuffs two levers TO THE SAME HEIGHT, this is the same with the better double locking types. My other book "LOCK PICKING" a manual of secret information shows this quite clearly, order your copy now. Flick through the booklet and you will see some of the various handcuffs in current use. Handcuffs are beautifully

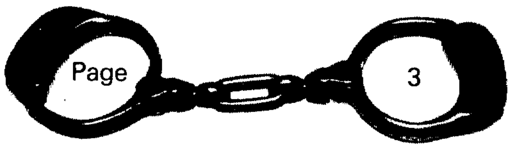


FIG 1

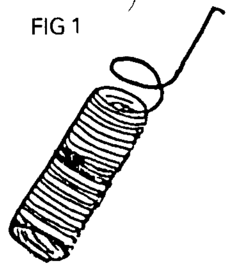


FIG 2

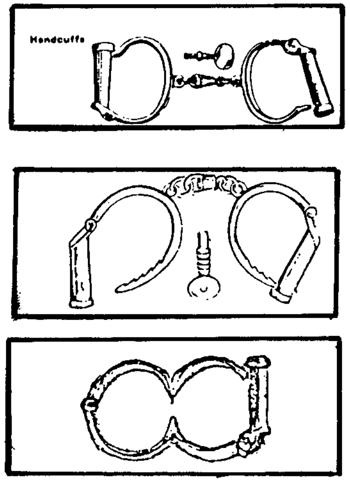


FIG 3 .

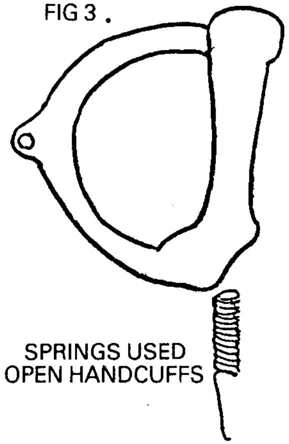


FIG 4 .

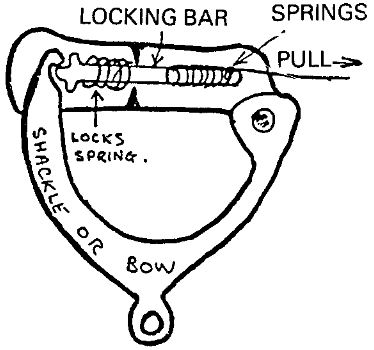


FIG 5

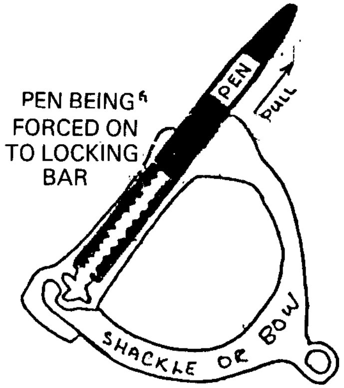


FIG 6 .





made, in some cases by the worlds leading gunsmiths, Colt. Smith and Wesson and Remmington. A fascinating hobby can be started by collecting examples from the various makers, but beware it's habit forming. Joking aside, it will also enable you to experiment with the opening of different models.

It is not really necessary for you to spend hundreds of pounds buying handcuffs because all handcuffs lock in much the same way. Ninety percent of handcuffs operate with one lever holding them closed the rest have two. The only exception to this is the type locking with a pin tumbler arrangement, see my book on Lock Picking. Some restraints are fitted with double locking devices which I will explain how to recognise and overcome later.

The word pick should be substituted by the word key in the case of handcuffs, because we by bending a wire or thin pieces of metal seek to duplicate the key. I am not in this book attempting to make you into expert locksmiths capable of opening all kinds of locks, to reach this standard depends upon experience and instruction, study and experimentation, but it can be done with enough interest in the subject.

Well, having explained that handcuffs are not designed to permanently hold a person for life and that the locks are really quite simple affairs, capable of being opened by anyone, lets get to work.

FIG. 1. shows the best possible spring steel pick, which will open all the handcuffs you are likely to come across, note that we have a good portion of spring still coiled which makes the picks handling easier. Should the spring become bent or weak simply pull out a new length and bend to the correct length so you have a brand new pick. I know you will not have the use of a spring pick in the event of capture but don't worry later I will explain how to escape even after a strip search, believe it or not using a central heating radiator or a humble electric light bulb.

FIG 7.

RAPPING OPEN HANDCUFFS

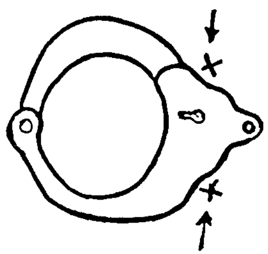


FIG 8.

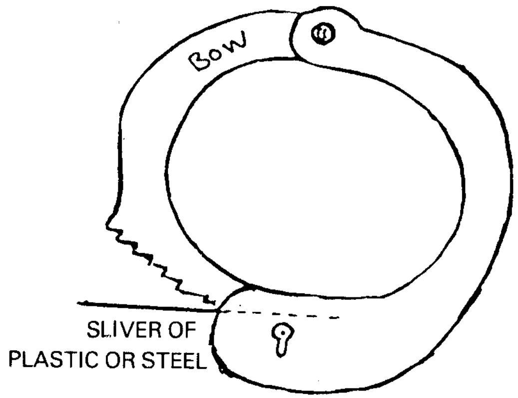


FIG 9.

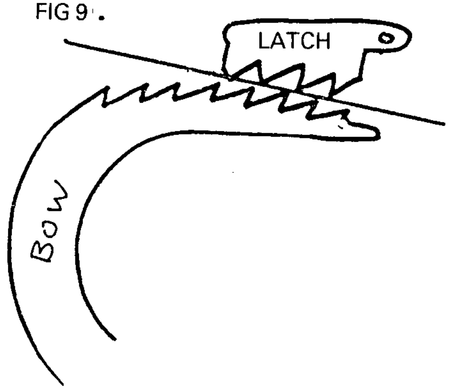


FIG 10.

BETTER TYPE PIN TUMBLER CUFF

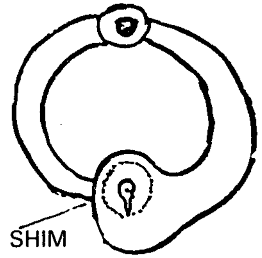


FIG 11.

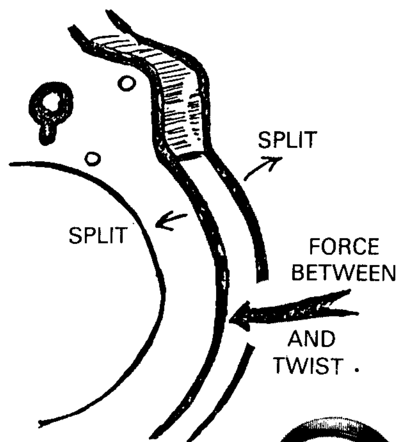


FIG 12.

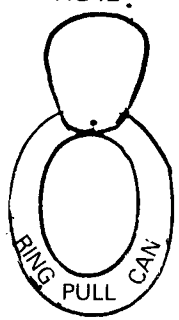
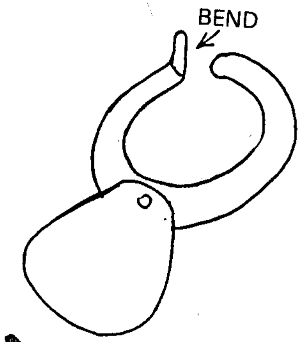


FIG 13.



This type of cuff is made in two types, adjustable and fixed bow, don't over look slipping the cuff over the hand, lubricating with soap, washing up liquid, oil or grease. Pull the cuff down as far onto the hand, then with the other hand press on the base of the thumb and the back of the hand, this has the effect of making the hand about the same size as your wrist, it's painfull but can work.

Some cuffs of this type FIG. 2. will open with the aid of a piece of string, nylon or cloth. Form a slip knot, pass this onto the locking bolt as far onto the thread as possible, then with care pull until the slip knot tightens on the thread. I can normally do it after about two attempts. Once you have it pull hard on the string, this draws back the locking bolt. You can use a strong shoelace or anything you can find. By now you may see that if you keep your eyes open and you know what you are looking for, nothing is impossible. Before we leave this type of handcuff I will explain a final method, you can even use part of your clothing, with a strip of nylon or cloth, ordinary cloth can be given strength by wetting it, take a strip about 1 cm wide, rip a small hole in the end of the cloth, push this onto the threaded locking bolt winding it round, once again pull and the lock will open like magic, give it a try.

MODERN SWING THROUGH ACTION HANDCUFFS

FIG. 6. Shows this most common handcuff in use today in the world, they are adjustable to fit any size wrist, and are used by the military and the police forces.
The bow or shackle would pass round and round unless the wrist is placed in them, a simple ratchet prevents any backward movement. A nice feature is that the handcuffs can never be accidentally locked in the pocket, they are always unlocked ready for use unlike the British SEE FIG. 2.

How to escape, I will start with a method called Rapping, this is the first thing I try with a padlock or cuffs FIG. 7. shows the points to try. I have marked them with crosses. Hit



the lock on the floor or with any object, but only at the points X, bang away until the ratchet is free, it will take a long time because the ratchet has to jump all the teeth in the bow until you are free.

SHIMMING

This Swing Through Handcuff can be opened without actually picking the locking mechanism, FIG. 8. shows a flat sliver of plastic or steel entering the handcuff. FIG. 9. showing the teeth of the bow being lifted out of the latch so releasing the prisoner. At this point I will explain that some cuffs have built into them a ANTI-SHIMMING DEVICE, which is only a small projection just at the point in the case that your would insert your shim or probe, this lip or projection deflects the shim away from the teeth. To over-come this PUSH THE BOW ONLY SLIGHTLY BUT NOT QUITE A FULL NOTCH, pressing the shim with the same movement into the case. This will slide the shim between the latch and the ratchet teeth and so avoiding this step projection. This done the cuffs may be pulled open but keep the shim moving or you will have to start all over again. Before we leave the subject of shimming take a look at FIG. 10. which shows another type of handcuff which has a pin tumbler lock, this type can be shimmed open just like the others.

Earlier I spoke about the use of plumbing to escape from some handcuffs, the edge of a radiator, or any suitable object is forced between the two halves of the handcuff case, with a twisting motion the handcuff will literally split into two, SEE FIG. 11. ALL HANDCUFFS AND LEG IRONS HAVE BUILT IN WEAK POINTS a bit like a chain, which is only as strong as its weakest link. Look hard enough and long enough and you will find them. The leverage which can be placed on the joining rivets is amazing with only simple objects which can be found in any room or cell, DON'T OVERLOOK THIS METHOD.



DOUBLE LOCKING CUFFS AND LEG IRONS

This feature serves two purposes, it makes the handcuffs more secure, locking the shackle bow preventing it tightening onto the prisoners' wrist causing discomfort. We can use this factor to our advantage, gaining a possible escape, compalin to our captor that the handcuffs are too tight on the wrist, we have taken the precaution of reddening the wrist by moving the cuff about. If you are fortunate and your captor is persuaded to remove or slacken the cuffs, make full use of this moment with a surprise attack. Warning don't ever make the mistake of over tightening the cuffs by pressing then tighter on your wrist in case your captor is unwilling to ease your pain, and you are left in agony unable to slacken them, after all most captors don't tend to be on our side. I know this dodge will not always work, never the less don't overlook it. Buy a pair of cuffs, we carry large stocks of handcuffs which you can experiment picking, there really is no substitute for practice.

FIG. 2. The handcuffs shown here can all be opened by inserting a coiled spring into the round key hole on the barrel of the lock, twisting it onto the threaded locking bolt which holds this type of handcuff closed.

FIG. 3. Shows this happening, once the spring has a firm hold on the thread, pull against the spring inside the cuffs so opening the cuffs.

FIG. 4. Shows this inside the cuff.

This size of spring will be found on or inside many objects, chairs,door closers, part of a car engine, electric motor starters and garden seats etc.

Another useful escape method on this restraint is by inserti.g some types of ball pen cases into the lock, forcing the pen case to cut its own thread on the handcuffs locking bar, FIG. 5. If the pen case diameter is a little large for the thread, a small piece of cloth can be first placed on the end of the locking barrel followed by the pen, filling the gap between the two.

PICKING OPEN SINGLE LOCKING HANDCUFFS AND LEGIRONS

Single locking handcuffs are easy to identify, they have only the one key hole and no other holes in the casing. Once you are sure that you are attempting to pick open a simple pair of single locking cuffs, or even a pair of double locking which have only been single locked, it is not nearly as difficult as it sounds, even with a crudely constructed picking tool, obviously you will not have the advantage of the professional coil spring shown in FIG. 1. and to be found in the lock pick sets, obtainable from the publisher of this book. However, it's childs play to construct first class pick from every day objects.

I am about to list some things you can find hanging about with which you could escape from any handcuff ever made.They are:-

1. The thicker wire inside any light bulb.
2. Any thick electric cable with single wire inside, not flex.
3. The metal end on your shoe lace, even some now being made in plastic.
4. Some retractable pens have nice coiled springs inside.
5. Don't overlook the pen coat pocket clip.
6. Electric switches, starters and motors.
7. Coat hanger wire.
8. Garden wire, chicken wire.
9. Any straight pin needle or safety pin.
10. The flint spring in any cigarette lighter.
11. Paper clips.
12. Ladies hair pin (bobby pin).
13. The ring pull tab on any can of beer etc.
    This can be seen on FIG. 12. and FIG. 13. It is bent ready to pick open a pair of handcuffs. If you bent it backwards and forwards at its thinest point it will snap after only a few bends.

Before we go any further just look about your room whilst sitting reading this booklet and make a list yourself of anything thin enough to be used to form this simple pick shape.

I have just noticed that I myself missed an obvious one in the spring holding the pages of my notepad together, with this coiled spring I could escape from Alcatraz. We must bend this wire pick to the correct length, although the length is not critical it is obviously better to be close. FIG. 14. shows this. Bend the wire to the length from the post, (that is the bit the key turns on) and the bottom of the key hole. Once you have this bit on the end bent it is really only a matter of turning it in the lock to open them. First try clockwise because 90% open in this direction. One other method of opening most single and double locking cuffs is to simply push any thin wire (eg. the end of your shoelace) into the lock as shown in FIG. 14. FIG. 15. shows another point to push your probe. This lifts the latch out off the bow or shackle.

HOW TO ESCAPE FROM THE DOUBLE LOCKING HANDCUFFS AND LEG IRONS

I explained earlier in this work that the double locking feature serves two purposes, one is to prevent the bow or shackle from moving forwards or backwards and the other, to make escape a little more difficult. At this point I would like to point our that it is impossible to shim open cuffs which have been double locked without first opening the double lock. To overcome this device it is a simple matter, just insert your pick and turn in the direction shown in FIG. 16. I myself would push this double lock bar inside clear by a push rather that a turning action. Take a look inside a typical pair of handcuffs as in FIG. 17. To double lock the handcuffs the sliding lock bar is pushed by means of the peg on the end of the key, through the hole in the side of the handcuff case. FIG. 17. shows it locked preventing the latch being lifted. Take a look at this feature and make sure you understand how it works. Also remember to look on the cuff for the tell tale hole indicating that it is a double locking variety. FIG. 18 shows that locking bar has been pushed clear at point X, leaving the latch free to be lifted. Another method we can try to release the double lock is to strike the cuffs to the left of the key hole causing the double lock bar to fly to the right, opening the cuffs.

This is a good point in our favour, I have questioned many many policemen and military personnel who use handcuffs as part

FIG 14

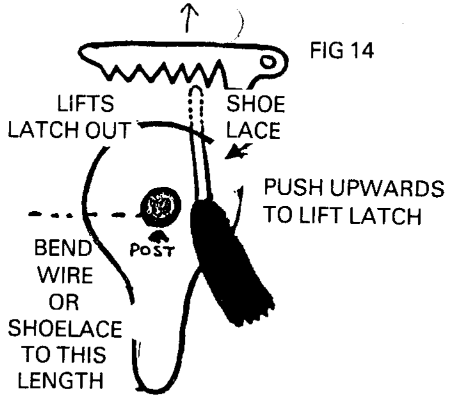


FIG 15

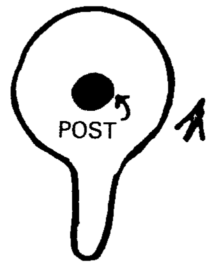


FIG 16.

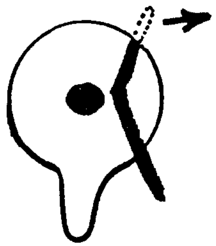
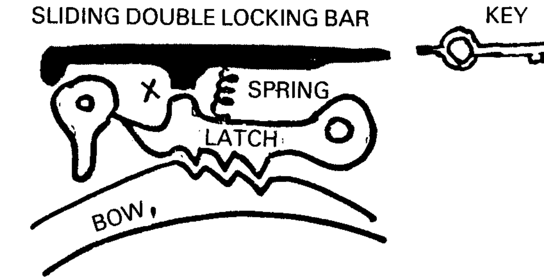
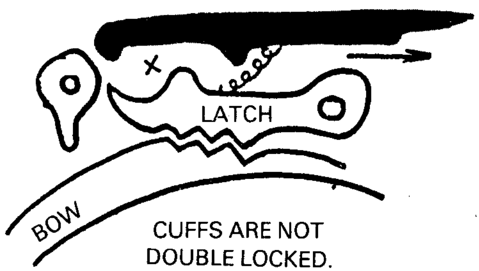


FIG 17.



CUFFS ARE DOUBLE LOCKED IN THIS STATE:
NOTE AT POINT X PREVENTS LATCH BEING LIFTED

FIG 18.

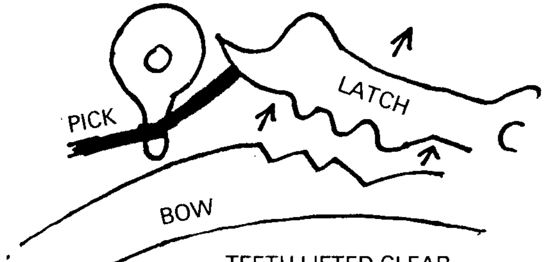


CUFFS ARE NOT
DOUBLE LOCKED.

NOW FREE TO BE PICKED

FIG 19

YOUR FREE!!



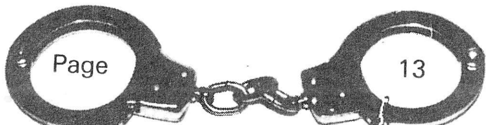
TEETH LIFTED CLEAR
OF EACH OTHER

of their daily job, and they don't know that that little peg on the end of the key is used for and most don't even know how to set the cuffs in the double lock mode. So it does not follow that because the handcuffs which you are secured in are the double locking kind that the person holding you even knows this, or has bothered to double lock them. FIG. 19. shows your pick opening the lock. Smash an old light bulb and look at the wire, bend it into a pick, and have a go yourself, after a few trial runs you will be able to open the cuffs with your pick as with the key. If you want handcuffs of any type. we are the main agents for most popular makes.

OTHER WORKS BY DAVID DE-VAL.
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The key to escapes.
Lock Picking
The Key to Lock Picking

Suppliers of Books, Handcuffs, Lock Picking Tools etc.







EVENING CHRONICLE, OLDHAM, THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 1983 —— 9

Tough task ahead for the living legend

SPECIAL CAGE AND CUFFS TO STOP ESCAPOLOGIST

OLDHAM'S living legend, escapologist David DeVal, will turn it on for the people of his home town for the first time at the week-end.

The 44-year-old wonder — whose amazing feats have earned him a world-wide reputation — is starring in the Oldham Summer Show.

On Saturday, David, of Springhead Avenue, Springhead, will pit his wits against a human cage.

Squeeze

Ironmongers William Bradbury and Sons of Westhulme Street, Oldham, have made a solid steel frame to try to hold the master of mysteries

But that's not all . . . before he is put in the cage he will be locked firmly in a tiny 3ft. by 2ft box. And that will be some squeeze for the 6ft. 3in. Houdini.

On Sunday, a special pair of handcuffs will be used to try and keep him put.

General Motor Company, of Rochdale Road, Oldham, have made them into small boxes to cover his fingers

He will then be tied in a sack and locked in a car boot,

Both events will begin at 3 p.m.

Dare-devil David has notched up incredible success stories all over the country by escaping from dungeons, barrels of beer and other bizarre places.

Reputation

But it is the first time he has ever attempted an escape in Oldham.

"I'm looking forward to it because I'm on home ground for a change," said David

"I often work as a magician in Oldham, but this is the first time local people will be able to see me in action."

But he says it won't be a push over: "I haven't even seen what is in store for me yet. I will have a look 24 hours before the event so I can get an idea of what I'm up against

"It certainly sounds hard enough to me from what I've been told."

And he says if he fails then his reputation will be ruined.

"It takes years to build up your name and it can be shattered in a few minutes if things go wrong.

"We shall just have to see how things go on the day."



